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FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO WASHINGTON

Cypher/OTP and
By Bag

No. 1392
February 15, 1962.

FOREIGN OFFICE (SECRET)
AND WHITEHALL (SECRET)
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IMMEDIATE
SECRET

Addressed to Washington telegram No. 1392 of February 15

Repeated for information to:

U.K. Mission Geneva [Immediate]
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And Saving to Paris No. 915.

Geneva telegram No. 113 [of February 14: Laos]

Please inform Mr. Rusk or Mr. Harriman as soon as possible of my views in the following terms. We are fast approaching a decisive point in the Laos negotiations. The Communists are convinced that General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum are doing everything they can to prevent a settlement. This is also my own view. They cannot understand why it is that the United States Government have for weeks now been unable to make Phoumi cooperate by more than occasional words or gestures. The reaction of Souphanouvong and the North Vietnamese has been to give him a taste of his own medicine and to put military pressure on him. Knowing that it was only military defeat that forced him to accept the cease-fire in May last year they no doubt hope that a few sharp reverses will now again quickly change his tune.

2. This is a dangerous situation. I doubt if the Russians can continue to persuade their allies that there is a real chance of reaching agreement in view of the fact that Phoumi and Boun Oum are still doing everything possible to avoid one after nearly a year of negotiations. When Pushkin returns to Geneva we may therefore be faced by a final appeal or even by something approaching an ultimatum. It is desirable to have a reply ready and I should be reluctant merely to embark with the Soviet Co-Chairman on an exchange of arguments about who is responsible

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for the present position. Further delay would not be wise and I therefore suggest that the only thing we can do now is to propose that the two Acting Co-Chairmen should go to Laos in a really serious attempt to reach a settlement.

3. I should prefer now to concentrate on action in Geneva rather than following up the ideas in your telegram No. 459. I hope the United States Government will agree that Mr. MacDonald should be instructed to speak to Mr. Pushkin on the lines of my immediately following telegram.

4. You will see that I have suggested that Mr. Harriman should go to Laos. This is an essential part of the plan if the Russians on the one hand and Phoumi on the other are to be persuaded that we mean business. In view of paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 458 I very much hope you will be successful in persuading Mr. Harriman.

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